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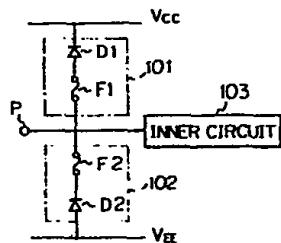
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⑯ Integrated circuit with electrostatic breakdown prevention circuits.

⑰ An integrated circuit having a high resistance to electrostatic breakdown before mounting and a high operation speed after mounting. At least one series-connected fuse element (F1) and electrostatic breakdown prevention device (D1) is provided between an external terminal (P) and a power source line (Vcc) and/or ground line (VEE) in the integrated circuit. After the integrated circuit is mounted to a printed circuit board, a voltage is applied to melt the fuse element, separating the electrostatic breakdown prevention device from the integrated circuit.

Fig. 1



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INTEGRATED CIRCUIT WITH ELECTROSTATIC BREAKDOWN
PREVENTION CIRCUITS

The present invention relates to an integrated circuit (IC) provided with electrostatic breakdown prevention circuits, particularly to an IC with electrostatic breakdown prevention circuits which can be disconnected from other circuits of the IC after the IC is mounted.

Recently, IC's have featured increasingly high-speed operation and high integration. Along with this, finer construction IC patterns and shallow junctions have come into increased use. Use of fine patterns and shallow junctions increases the speed of IC operation, however, reduces the resistance to electrostatic breakdown. Measures to prevent electrostatic breakdown therefore have become necessary.

Up until now, the basic measure taken to prevent electrostatic breakdown was to provide circuits for absorbing the electrostatic energy rather than to increase the resistance to electrostatic breakdown per se, as the latter is difficult without significantly reducing the IC operation speed. Various kinds of elements and circuits have been proposed for this purpose. Even the provision of electrostatic breakdown prevention means for a high-speed IC, however, will reduce the operation speed somewhat. Generally, the larger the dimensions of the IC pattern forming an electrostatic breakdown prevention element, the greater the ^{protection} effect of the element. On the other hand, the larger the pattern dimensions of an element, the less appropriate the element is for high-speed IC operation.

embodiment

An / of the present invention can provide an IC with electrostatic breakdown prevention circuits which can be separated from the other circuits of the IC 5 after mounting of the IC, thus eliminating the adverse effect of the same on the IC operation speed.

According to the present invention, there is provided an IC comprising an external terminal, a series connection circuit of a fuse element and an electrostatic breakdown prevention means between the external terminal and a power source line or a ground line. The fuse 10 element is connected between the external terminal and the electrostatic breakdown prevention means, and an inner circuit/connected to the external terminal. is

Reference is made, by way of example, to the 15 accompanying drawings in which:-

Figure 1 is a diagram of an electrostatic breakdown prevention circuit of an IC according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a plan view of a pattern in the case 20 where the circuit of Fig. 1 is formed on a semiconductor substrate; and

Fig. 3 is a partial sectional view of the pattern of Fig. 2 along the line A-A.

25 Electrostatic breakdown of an IC primarily occurs during the packaging, testing, transporting, or mounting to a printed circuit board or the like. Electrostatic breakdown of an IC rarely occurs after mounting to a printed circuit board. This is because the resistance 30 to electrostatic breakdown is increased by the increased stray capacity arising from connection to external circuits and decreased impedance arising from the parallel connection of other parts. Also, of course, after mounting, the opportunities for direct contact of 35 IC's by workers or tools decrease. This is another reason for the decrease in electrostatic breakdown. Therefore, after mounting an IC, the electrostatic

largely breakdown prevention elements are/superfluous. The present invention was conceived of based on this fact.

In the present invention, the electrostatic breakdown prevention circuits enable high resistance to 5 electrostatic breakdown until IC mounting. After IC mounting, the electrostatic breakdown prevention circuits are separated from the other circuits of the IC, thus not obstructing high IC operation speed.

Figure 1 is a diagram of an electrostatic breakdown 10 prevention circuit of an IC according to an embodiment of the present invention. The electrostatic breakdown prevention circuit (101, 102) of Fig. 1 is connected to a conductor connecting an input or output terminal P and an inner circuit of the IC.

15 The circuit of Fig. 1 comprises a diode D1 and a fuse F1 series-connected between a power source V_{CC} line having a voltage V_{CC} and the conductor connecting terminal P to the inner circuit 103, and a fuse F2 and a diode D2 series-connected between the conductor connect- 20 ing terminal P to the inner circuit 103 and a ground V_{EE} line having a voltage V_{EE} . Both fuses are connected of the diode V_{EE} . Both fuses are connected on the side/closest to the conductor connecting terminal P to the inner circuit 103.

If the voltage V_p of the input or output terminal P 25 of the IC is between V_{EE} and V_{CC} , both the diodes D1 and D2 receive a backward bias voltage. Since the signal voltages at the input or output terminals of the IC have voltage values between V_{CC} and V_{EE} , the addition of the fuses and diodes has no effect on the 30 static characteristics of the IC or on the basic function thereof. When the terminal P receives an electrostatic surge voltage, however, the diodes D1 and D2 absorb electrostatic energy and act as protective elements to protect the inner circuit of the IC.

35 Since the diodes D1 and D2 also work as elements having an electrostatic capacity, they decrease the operation speed of the IC. The decrease of the operation

speed is very serious for a high-speed IC. To prevent a decrease of the operation speed, after the IC is mounted to a printed circuit board, the fuses F1 and F2 are melted by applying a voltage slightly higher than the forward voltage drop of the diodes D1 or D2 between the terminal P and the power source V_{CC} line or ground V_{EE} line. This disconnects the diodes D1 and D2 from the terminal P. This technique enables one to use, as an electrostatic breakdown prevention element, an element with a high protection ability which would otherwise significantly reduce the operation speed of the IC.

Figure 2 is a plan view of a pattern in the case where the electrostatic breakdown prevention circuit of Fig. 1 is formed on the semiconductor substrate of the IC using PN junction diodes. In Fig. 2, reference numeral 1 is the conductor pattern of the power source V_{CC} , 2 is a cathode contact hole of the diode D1 connected to the power source V_{CC} line, 3 is an N-type area isolated from the substrate for the diode D1, 4 is a metallized pattern of a bonding pad to connect the terminal P through a lead wire, 5 is a P^+ diffusion area for the diode D1, 6 is an anode contact hole of the diode D1, 7 is a cover layer aperture for the fuse F1, 8 is a cover layer aperture for the bonding pad, 9 is a pad area isolated from the substrate for the bonding pad, 10 is a cover layer aperture for the fuse F2, 11 is a cathode contact hole of the diode D2, 12 is a P^+ diffusion area for the diode D2, 13 is an anode contact hole of the diode D2, 14 is an N-type area isolated from the substrate for the diode D2, and 15 is the conductor pattern of the ground V_{EE} line. In Fig. 2, the fuses F1 and F2 are narrow patterns made of the same material as the wiring of the integrated circuit. The material is metal, polycrystalline silicon, or the like. Although PN junction diodes are shown as the diodes, Schottky diodes may be used instead.

Figure 3 is a partial sectional view of the pattern of Fig. 2 along the line A-A. In the Figure, the hatched portion shows the conductor pattern. Reference numeral 16 shows an insulator layer. Reference symbol n^+ 5 shows N-type semiconductor containing a larger amount of impurities, and n^- an N-type semiconductor containing a smaller amount of impurities. The P-type semiconductor of the P^+ diffusion area 12 is used for the anode of the diode, and the N-type semiconductor is used for the 10 cathode of the diode. While not shown in the Figure, generally the surface of the pattern is covered with a cover layer. The cover layer is taken off at bonding portions of the lead wires. On the fuses F1 and F2, the cover layer is also taken off, as shown by blocks of 15 broken lines in Fig. 2, creating the cover layer apertures 7 and 10. The cover layer aperture on the fuse not only ensures that when the fuse melts, the fuse is easily broken by partial evaporation, but also prevents cracking of the cover layer. This therefore prevents 20 deterioration of the reliability of the IC after the fuse is cut.

Although diodes are used as the electrostatic breakdown prevention means in this embodiment, thyristors, transistors, or combination transistors, 25 resistors, and the like can also be used. The fuses should withstand electrostatic energy small in quantity but high instantaneously in voltage and should be melted by heat due to electrical energy low in voltage but applied over a comparatively long time. So long as the 30 above-mentioned characteristics are satisfied, the fuses may be made of any material in any form appropriate for the IC production process.

An IC with electrostatic breakdown prevention circuits according to this embodiment may not be tested 35 for dynamic characteristics, e.g., switching characteristics, before mounting, because the diodes D1 and D2 are connected to the input or output terminals. However,

the dynamic characteristics of IC's belonging to the same production lot can be estimated by melting the fuses and then testing the characteristics of a sample chip from the identical lot.

5 It will be understood that, while two series-connected fuses and diodes (101 and 102 in Fig. 1) are provided for the same terminal in the above embodiment, it is possible to provide a single fuse and diode (for example 102 in Fig. 1), connected 10 in series between the terminal and either a ground V_{EE} line or a power source V_{CC} line.

Of course, protection circuits in accordance with the present invention may be applied to a number of terminals of the same IC.

CLAIMS

1. An integrated circuit comprising: an external terminal; / ^{at least one} series connection circuit of a fuse element and an electrostatic breakdown prevention means between said external terminal and a power source line/or a ground line, said fuse element being connected between said external terminal and said electrostatic breakdown prevention means; and an inner circuit connected to said external terminal.
2. An integrated circuit as set forth in claim 1, wherein said electrostatic breakdown prevention means is a PN junction diode.
3. An integrated circuit as set forth in claim 1, wherein said electrostatic breakdown prevention means is a Schottky diode.
4. An integrated circuit as set forth in claim 1, 2, or 3, wherein the material of said fuse element is the same as that/ ^{of} wiring of said inner circuit.
5. An integrated circuit as set forth in any ^{preceding} claim, wherein the material of said fuse element is polycrystalline silicon.

6. An integrated circuit as set forth in any preceding claim, wherein said integrated circuit comprises a cover layer to protect the surface of the chip of said integrated circuit, and said cover layer has apertures on said fuse element.

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Fig. 1

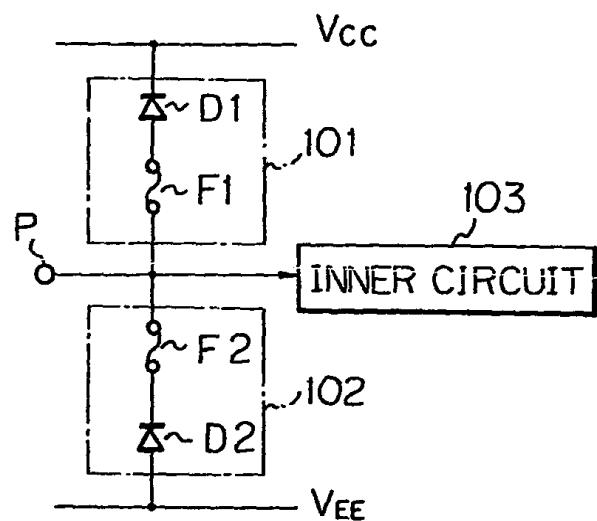
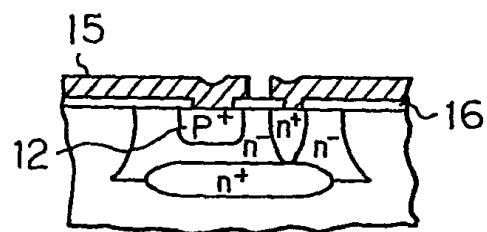


Fig. 3



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Fig. 2

